COMMENDANT OF MIDSHIPMEN INSTRUCTION 5420.1A

From: Commandant of Midshipmen, U.S. Naval Academy

Subj: NAVAL ACADEMY WOMEN'S NETWORK

Ref: (a) USNAINST 7000.4A
(b) COMDTMIDNINST 4653.1S
(c) COMDTMIDNINST 5400.6X CH-2

1. Background. Mentoring is an important developmental tool for leaders. While some programs attempt to match one mentor to one mentee, experience tells us that a constellation of mentors is best. That is, a variety of mentors provides a mentee the best professional development, advice on career intentions, and assistance in creating work-life balance. To this end, U.S. Naval Academy (USNA) provides a multitude of forums for midshipmen to develop mentoring relationships - in extracurricular activities, sports programs, through faculty and staff interaction, and professional conferences. To complement these programs, the Naval Academy Women's Network (NAWN) exists to create additional forums for midshipmen mentoring, developing the mentoring skill amongst our Junior Officers, and providing oversight for the effectiveness of this program. NAWN will encourage the career intentions and retention of women in the Navy and Marine Corps through the senior ranks.

2. Cancellation. COMDTMIDNINST 5420.1

3. Purpose. To establish, provide guidance, and designate responsibility for the implementation of NAWN for the Brigade of Midshipmen. This instruction serves to provide the requisite structure and oversight for network functioning, but, the heart and soul of the network resides in the relationship of choice between mentor and mentee.

4. Applicability. This instruction applies to all participating midshipmen, participating mentors, and oversight personnel.

5. Discussion

   a. NAWN seeks to achieve the following:

      (1) Encourage and inspire USNA midshipmen, with particular focus on women, to excel as midshipmen leaders in academics, athletics, professionalism, and character.
(2) Provide a resource for all midshipmen to discuss leadership with mentors/Officers complementing their Chain of Command, creating a constellation of mentors, and contributing to their development as leaders.

(3) Foster relationships between mentors and midshipmen that continue beyond graduation.

b. NAWN will schedule a calendar of events that engage midshipmen on a wide variety of leadership topics. Typical events may include, but are not limited to the following:

(1) NAWN Kick-Off Event - NAWN’s introduction to the upcoming academic year’s lineup of events and opportunities for midshipmen. This open-house style event provides an overview of the year ahead, as well as testimonials from active participants of NAWN. The intent is for upperclass midshipmen to return to the Hall and share opportunities with 3/C and 4/C Midshipmen. The Kickoff typically occurs in early September.

(2) Speed Mentoring - Provides a setting for midshipmen to quickly meet several Officers from various communities in hopes to foster long and lasting mentor relationships. It is up to the midshipmen to follow-up with their desired mentors after the event and continue to grow the mentorship relationship.

(3) Military Life Symposium - This annual symposium fosters a dialogue to equip midshipmen to navigate the day-to-day challenges of leading a life in uniform while balancing both professional and personal decision-making. The Military-Life Symposium offers all midshipmen the opportunity to attend a series of concurrent sessions made up of diverse panelists to address unique topics such as diversity, equality, inclusion, combat integration, intersectionality and authentic leadership, relationships in the military, and health and well-being.

(4) Lean-In Circles - Peer mentoring circles focused on the conversation of gender and the role it plays in our personal and professional lives. Circles are moderated by civilian and/or military faculty and staff, while midshipmen drive the discussion topics and dialogue. Circles typically consist of 10 - 15 midshipmen and meet a minimum of six times during the Academic Year.

(5) Midshipman participation in the Officer Women’s Leadership Symposium (OWLS) - Each Spring NAWN registers midshipmen to participate in OWLS, a two-day event which brings together active duty and veteran women to facilitate leadership discussion, networking, and skill building.

6. Responsibilities

a. Director, Center for Experiential Leadership (ELD). Director ELD will provide administrative oversight for the network including managing the budget. The Director will appoint, in writing, the senior member of the Executive Steering Committee (ESC).
b. Chair, ESC. Appointed by the Director, Center for ELD, an Officer will serve as the Chair of the ESC. The Chair will develop strategy and be responsible for the overall maintenance and execution of the network, including recruiting and selecting members to join the ESC.

c. NAWN ESC. The ESC will consist of select Officers and midshipmen to assist the Chair in planning and executing the mission of NAWN. Selected by the Chair and the Officers of the ESC, one midshipman will serve as the President of the ESC. The President will work with the ESC Officers to lead midshipmen members to plan, coordinate, and execute NAWN events.

d. Senior Mentors. Active duty, reserve, and retired Officers in the rank of O-4 and above stationed at USNA, who are graduates of USNA or have significant knowledge of the institution and its operations, will serve as mentors to the midshipmen and as primary liaisons and mentors to a select group of Junior Mentors. Senior Mentors will meet periodically to assess overall network effectiveness and to share insight and experiences.

e. Junior Mentors. Active duty, reserve, and retired Officers in the rank of O-3 and below stationed at USNA will serve as mentors to midshipmen and will be accountable to the Senior Mentor to whom they have been assigned.

7. Procedures

a. Excusals/Movement Orders (MOs). Excusals/MOs for network events will be managed by the ESC through the Center for ELD and submitted in accordance with reference (b). Network MOs/excusals will be categorized in the Midshipmen Information System (MIDS) under "professional development" or "other" as fits the event.

b. Frequency of Mentoring. Frequency of Mentoring. Frequency of meetings between individual mentors and their mentees will depend on the needs and desires of the Midshipman and will typically occur during the academic day during Midshipman free periods. Activities outside customary times will adhere to the Table of Priorities and submission of appropriate requests through the Chain of Command in accordance with reference (c).

c. Funding. Experiential Leadership Development will fund the implementation and execution of the Network through various gift funds.

8. Review and Effective Date. Per OPNAVINST 5215.17A, LEAD will review this instruction annually around the anniversary of its issuance date to ensure applicability, currency, and consistency with Federal, Department of Defense, Secretary of the Navy, and Navy policy and statutory authority using OPNAV 5215/40 Review of instruction. This instruction will be in effect for 10 years, unless revised or cancelled in the interim, and will be reissued by the 10-year anniversary date if it is still required, unless it meets one of the exceptions in OPNAVINST
5215.17A, paragraph 9. Otherwise, if the instruction is no longer required, it will be processed for cancellation as soon as the need for cancellation is known following the guidance in OPNAV Manual 5215.1 of May 2016.

J. P. MCDONOUGH III

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